

Altered State of Consciousness as a Narrative Tool in Dennis Lehane's *Shutter Island*

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ABSTRACT: This article delves into Dennis Lehane's *Shutter Island* (2003) and its challenge to the conventional notion of a unified humanist self, proposing instead that the post-war self is inherently fragmented. It particularly scrutinizes this fragmentation through the experiences of a traumatized character in the novel, illustrating how severe wartime and post-war events disrupt and fracture individuals. Furthermore, it examines the role of storytelling and narration as essential tools for trauma survivors to navigate and reconcile the shattered aspects of their identities. Through storytelling, the protagonist Teddy discovers a means of survival by articulating his experiences and memories. The paper emphasizes how trauma directly leads to the fragmentation of the human psyche and explores how narrative serves as a medium for the protagonist to confront his trauma. Through Teddy's narrative, the novel provides insights into the complexities of the post-war self, the lasting wounds of trauma, and the potential for storytelling to assist in coping with trauma, offering a deeper understanding of the fragmented self in the aftermath of war.

KEYWORDS: Trauma, Agency, Altered Consciousness, Narrative, Fiction, *Shutter Island*, Fragmented Self

EXPLORING ALTERED STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND NARRATIVE AGENCY IN DENNIS LEAHANE'S *SHUTTER ISLAND*

In Dennis Lehane's *Shutter Island* (2003), the narrative illustrates the collapse of the Cartesian concept of self-cognition amidst the backdrop of the post-war era. The novel navigates the complex terrain of human consciousness, effectively illustrating the breakdown of the foundational principle "I think, therefore I am" in an environment that challenges the very notion of autonomy, agency, and existence. Through the lens of its troubled protagonist and his interactions with a world that is at once bewildering and deceptive, *Shutter Island* stands as a profound examination of the psychological aftermath of war and its capacity to unsettle the core of human subjectivity, echoing the existential insecurities and the quest for meaning in a post-war context.

This article will show protagonist's crisis as his consciousness breaks down, leaving him unable to attribute the projections of its own consciousness to the self, or affirm his existence and authority, thereby challenging his sense of autonomy and agency. Herein, this chapter will delve into the impact of trauma on war veterans, exploring the psychological aftermath of combat and the complex journey of trauma. Thereafter, it will examine the voice hearing phenomenon as how unattributable, disembodied authoritative voices lead to a sense of uncanny, and in turn lead to a loss of agency in the protagonist. Also, it will illustrate how the protagonist seeks to reclaim some sense of agency by turning these voices into characters and narratives, engaging with them in an effort to mitigate his existential angst. This process takes a form of narrative and serves as a means of dealing with trauma, aiming to reconstruct a sense of self and security in a universe that, while originating from his mind, gains a disturbing autonomy.

POST-HUMANISM AND DECONSTRUCTION OF THE SELF

Anti-Humanism rejects anthropocentrism, the idea that humans are the primary or most important entities in the cosmos. As Kate Soper remarks, anti-humanism tends to "secrete a humanist rhetoric" (1986, p. 128). Hence, it casts doubt on the notion that everything should be understood in light of human values and interests, and that humans are the standard by which all other things are measured. In other words, as an idealist humanism argues "the world exists only in so far as it is reflected upon and understood in thought, and that since thought is an exclusively human property, the world exists only by virtue of its conceptualization by 'Man'" (Soper, 1986, p. 24). Shaped by the philosophies of Friedrich Nietzsche, and particularly by French post-structuralist thinkers or intellectuals of the twentieth century, anti-humanism challenges the concept of man as a means for scholarly investigation. Nietzsche's declaration that "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him" (1974, p. 181) is a seminal moment in the emergence of anti-humanism, marking a significant shift in the trajectory of philosophical thought. This statement is not just theological; it is often misunderstood as a literal declaration of atheism or a simple rejection of religion. However, it is a profound

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acknowledgment of the shifting foundations of Western philosophy. The phrase "God is dead" signifies the end of an era when objective truth and values are guaranteed by a divine order. As Tom Grimwood argues according to Nietzsche "[i]f God has become unbelievable, then our faith in the divinity of 'truth' is also placed in question" (2011, p. 4). Accordingly, "God is dead" fundamentally challenges traditional Western philosophy on several fronts and thus undermines the metaphysical foundations. It questions the theocentric worldview which was prevailing from medieval era to the early modern period. The theocentric view was centered around the belief in God as the ultimate foundation of reality and transcendental entity from whose creativity man is a product.

Moreover, with the advent of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, humanity, rather than God, became the focal point, elevated to an almost divine status (apotheosis). In this new framework, man was seen as "a transcendental signified from whose consciousness everything derived and could be understood" (Aryan, 2020, p. 22). Correspondingly, Nietzsche deconstructs Western metaphysics, and challenges the traditional notion of a coherent and constant self as a singular entity that is the source of thoughts. Hence, Nietzsche undermines the Cartesian *cogito*, the assumption that the act of thinking confirms the existence of an "I", or that there must be an entity that generates thought and is assumed to be the cause of it. In contrast, Nietzsche argues that "a thought comes when 'it' wants, and not when 'I' want. It is, therefore, a *falsification* of the facts to say that the subject 'I' is the condition of the predicate 'thinking'" (2002, p. 17). As he continues "'it' contains an *interpretation* of the process, does not belong to the process itself" (p. 17). Hence, Nietzsche suggests that the ego is not the cause of thought but rather a consequence of it. In other words, he sees the "I" not as the originator of thoughts and actions, but as something that emerges from the process of interpreting and making sense of them. According to him, the self is not a static entity. However, it is a dynamic, multifaceted process, an artificial unity imposed upon the chaos of thoughts, experiences and sensations that constitute our self. In addition to, Nietzsche's critique of the "I think" as a linguistic and grammatical concept is a crucial part of his broader philosophical challenge to traditional notions of the self. He suggests that the grammatical necessity of having a subject for every predicate leads us to assume that there is a coherent, unified 'I' that is responsible for the act of thinking. According to him, this structure imposes an artificial order on our experience of thinking, and he sees this assumption as a byproduct of our language's structure, not necessarily an accurate representation of how consciousness works. As he advocates "[p]eople are following grammatical habits here in drawing conclusions, reasoning that 'thinking is an activity, behind every activity something is active'" (Nietzsche, 2002, pp. 17-18). This approach upends the conventional understanding of the self as the central and autonomous agent of thoughts, feelings and actions, paving the way for post-structuralist thought that would further deconstruct the concept of the self.

ALTERED STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS AS A NARRATIVE TOOL IN *SHUTTER ISLAND*

The story sets in the year 1954, the narrative unfolds around U.S. Marshal Teddy Daniels and his partner, Chuck Auld, as they embark on a tense and mysterious investigation on Shutter Island, Ashecliffe Hospital dedicated to the containment and treatment of dangerous criminals with severe mental disorders. Teddy's primary mission is to unravel the baffling disappearance of Rachel Solando, a patient accused of a heinous crime, who has vanished under inexplicably tight security. As Teddy delves deeper into the enigmatic surroundings and confront the island's secretive staff, he begins to encounter a web of deceit, psychological manipulation, and shocking revelations that challenge his perception of reality. The island, isolated and foreboding, becomes a labyrinthine puzzle where the boundaries between truth and illusion blur, pushing Teddy to question everything he believes about the case, his partner, and his own sanity. Like many other postmodernist works, the novel "is basically concerned with analysing a work of art in order to make its dominant totalising, naturalising and internalising discourses or metanarratives explicit" (Aryan, 2022, p. 15).

The environment of *Shutter Island* is meticulously crafted to mirror the chaotic and fragmented structure of schizophrenia. The island's setting—a remote, isolated, and highly controlled psychiatric facility—serves as a physical manifestation of the disorder's complex and disordered nature. Just as schizophrenia involves delusions and a disconnection from reality, the island's atmosphere is suffused with uncertainty, deception, and a pervasive sense of unreality. As Teddy describes the mental state of patients on the Shutter Island by saying "[t]he patients here, apparently, suffer a variety of delusions" (Lehane, 2003, p. 22), and Chuck reply: you mean "Schizophrenics?" (Lehane, 2003, p. 23). The environment acts as an external reflection of the patients including Teddy's internal psychological turmoil, with the island's obscured truths and hidden agendas mirroring the fragmented, elusive reality faced by individuals with schizophrenia. Through this parallel, the novel explores the concept of reality as subjective and malleable, echoing the schizophrenic experience where the line between what is real and what is perceived is often blurred. *Shutter Island*, with its oppressive environment and intricate deceptions, becomes a symbol of the mind's capacity to create its own perceived reality, further entwining the themes of mental illness and the search for truth within the narrative's core.

TRAUMA AND PSYCHOLOGICAL AFTERMATH OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Teddy's traumatic past is gradually revealed through a series of flashbacks and hallucinations, underscoring the profound impact of his war-time experiences. Through the flashbacks, Teddy is depicted as a veteran of the Second World War, a period during which he exposes to numerous horrifying experiences, and one of the central sources of Teddy's enduring trauma is his participation in the liberation of a concentration camp. He is haunted by the horrific scenes he witnessed at Dachau. As Cathy Caruth explains that

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“trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature –the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to hunt the survivor later on” (1996,p. 4). Teddy's trauma from serving as a U.S. soldier during World War II illustrates through his conversation with Dr. Cawley, a chief of staff at Shutter Island. While they have a conversation, Dr. Cawley plays the music, from that moment the music transports Teddy back to those dreadful times. The sounds of the classical piece acts as a trigger, pulling him into the depths of his memories, where the ghastly images of Dachau lay vivid and unsettling:

Cawley, behind them, placed a record on the phonograph and the scratch of the needle was followed by stray pops and hisses that reminded him of the phones he'd tried to use. Then a balm of strings and piano replaced the hisses. Something classical, Teddy knew that. Prussian. Reminding him of cafes overseas and a record collection he'd seen in the office of a sub-commandant at Dachau, the man listening to it when he'd shot himself in the mouth (Lehane, 2003,p. 68)

The mention of Dachau in the passage is significant as it ties back to Teddy's traumatic experiences during World War II, particularly the liberation of concentration camps and the atrocities he witnessed there. This particular music evokes Teddy's memories of being overseas, specifically recalling a scene in a café and, more poignantly, a record collection he encountered in the office of a sub-commandant at Dachau concentration camp. The specific memory of the sub-commandant listening to a similar piece of music before committing suicide by shooting himself is vivid and haunting. This connection between the music and Teddy's past illustrates how deeply the trauma of war is ingrained in him, showcasing the power of sensory experiences to evoke intense and painful memories. The music, meant to be soothing, instead serves as a portal to Teddy's most traumatic experiences, highlighting the enduring impact of his war-time horrors.

Teddy's enduring trauma couples with the haunting memory of shooting unarmed men. The act of executing unarmed men, despite the heinous crimes they represented, marks a departure from the conventions of warfare and justice, thrusting Teddy into a complex battle with his conscience. As Teddy explains:

At Dachau, the SS guards surrendered to us. Five hundred of them. Now there were reporters there, but they'd seen all the bodies piled up at the train station too. They could smell exactly what we were smelling. They looked at us and they wanted us to do what we did. And we sure as hell wanted to do it. So we executed every one of those fucking Krauts. Disarmed them, leaned them against walls, executed them (Lehane, 2003,pp. 128-29)

This moment not only solidifies his trauma, but also deepens his sense of guilt, especially as he reflects on his actions and their alignment with justice and morality. It is suggested that this experience contributes significantly to Teddy's later aversion to holding a gun or engaging in shooting, symbolizing his rejection of violence and his struggle to reconcile his actions at Dachau with his personal ethics and sense of self. Hence, Teddy's trauma, compounded by his inability to save the prisoners and his participation in the execution of the guards, exemplifies the devastating impact of war on his psyche.

The traumatic experiences Teddy endured at Dachau profoundly impacted his personal life, leading him down a path of alcoholism and estrangement from his family. The haunting memories of the atrocities he witnessed and participated in at the concentration camp have left him unable to find solace at home or provide the care and attention his family deserves. This emotional disconnect drives Teddy to seek refuge in alcohol, using it as a means to numb his pain and guilt, however this escape only serves to widen the gap between him and his loved ones. His wife's complaints about his carelessness are a testament to the deep changes in Teddy's behavior and priorities, underscoring how significantly his war experiences have altered his capacity to engage with his family. The fallout from Dachau not only battles within Teddy's psyche, but also manifests in his deteriorating relationships, showcasing the far-reaching effects of trauma on veterans' lives and the ripple effects on those closest to them. Teddy was hunted by the recurrent dreams of his wife Dolores, complaining “[a]re you ever sober? Are you ever fucking sober anymore? Answer me . . . Killed a lot of people in the war . . . Why you drink” (Lehane, 2003,pp. 77-8). In this regard, Teddy's deep-seated carelessness, a direct consequence of the trauma he suffered during the war, tragically led him to overlook the severity of his wife's mental health struggles. Dolores was “clinically depressed. She was diagnosed as manicdepressive” (Lehane, 2003,p. 295). Consumed by his own demons and numbed by his inability to engage fully with his personal life, Teddy failed to recognize or address the critical signs of his wife's deteriorating condition. As Dr. Cawley confronts Teddy with reality:

She was suicidal. She hurt the children . You refused to see it. You thought she was weak. You told yourself sanity was a choice, and all she had to do was remember her *responsibility* . . . You stayed away from home. You ignored all the signs. You ignored what the teachers told you, the parish priest, her own family.

My wife was not insane!

And why? Because you were *embarrassed*. (Lehane, 2003,p. 295)

This oversight had catastrophic consequences when, in a tragic manifestation of her illness, she drowned their three children Edward, Daniel and Rachel. This horrifying act underscores the devastating impact of Teddy's neglect and the importance of acknowledging and addressing mental health issues within the family.

Accordingly, the climax of Teddy's trauma is rooted in the heart-wrenching tragedy of losing his three children, a devastating act carried out by their mother. Struggling with her mental health, his wife succumbed to a dark episode of her mental disorder, leading her to drown their children in a moment of profound despair. As Teddy asks Dolores:

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Where's Rachel?

School.

She's too young for school, honey.

Not my school, his wife said and showed him her teeth.

Teddy screamed. He screamed so loudly that Dolores fell out of the swing and he jumped over her and jumped over the railing at the back of the gazebo and ran screaming, screaming no, screaming God, screaming please, screaming not my babies, screaming Jesus, screaming oh oh oh (Lehane, 2003: 315)

Hence, Teddy Faced with the unbearable reality of his children's loss and the shocking betrayal of trust, Teddy was pushed to the brink of his own psychological limits. In a tumultuous response to grief and an overwhelming sense of justice for his children, he made the irreversible decision to end his wife's life, as she says "I need you to free me" (Lehane, 2003,p. 319). This act, though driven by a deep-seated anguish and a desire for retribution, only served to deepen Teddy's trauma, entangling him further in a web of guilt and sorrow. The event marks the pinnacle of his psychological unraveling, highlighting the destructive power of untreated mental illness and the profound consequences of his failure to address the warning signs within his family.

Teddy promised himself he wouldn't use a gun after seeing terrible things in the war because he wanted to leave that violence behind "[a]fter the war, after Dachau, he'd swore he would never kill again unless he had no choice" (Lehane, 2003,p. 319). However, his deep love for his wife made him break this promise in a tragic way when he had to shoot her after she drowned their children. This act, born out of an unimaginable tragedy—the drowning of their children by her hands—represents a profound betrayal of his own principles and an irrevocable step away from the man he aspired to be, he felt like a bad husband, father and soldier as he couldn't save the people in the concentration camp and his own family. This mix of guilt from the war and from his family tragedy weighs heavily on Teddy, leading him to struggle with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that "the survivors may experience flashbacks about trauma, especially when they encounter a traumatic reminder or trigger. Flashbacks differ from normal memories as they involve intense sensory re-experiencing of the trauma (smelling the same smells, hearing the same sounds, feeling the same sensations on the skin)" (Kaminer &Eagle, 2010, pp. 31-2). Hence, through the flashbacks Teddy's traumatic past came to the surface and showed all his awful memories that filled him with sadness and regret. This shows how deep emotional pain from horrible scenes of the war to personal loss can really affect someone's mental health, making it hard for them to cope with life after such events.

ALTERED CONSCIOUSNESS, VOICE HEARING AND NARRATION

Due to the overwhelming trauma Teddy experiences, from the horrors of war to the unimaginable family tragedy, he begins to suffer from hallucinations and finds himself living in a state of denial. To cope with the unbearable reality of his actions and losses, Teddy unconsciously creates an alternate version of himself. In this new persona Edward Daniels (Teddy), he transforms into a hero, a U.S. Marshal on a mission to find Rachel Solando as well as his wife's killer Andrew Laeddis, diverging sharply from the truth of his own responsibility. Louis A. Sass argues that such individual becomes hyper-reflective and intensely conscious of their own introspection, a condition that may lead to the disintegration of the self and, consequently, of personal authority. He characterizes hyperreflexive qualities as "acute self-consciousness and self-reference, and . . . alienation from action and experience" (1992,p. 8). People experiencing such hyperreflexivity often feel detached from their thoughts, emotions, and actions, losing a sense of ownership over these parts of themselves. Sass proposes that schizophrenia parallels, or perhaps inversely reflects, solipsism. In this light, the world is perceived as a subjective creation of the individual's consciousness. He challenges the common view that madness or psychosis, including schizophrenia, is primarily characterized by "poor reality-testing" (1995,p. 2) an inability to differentiate between real and unreal worlds. According to Sass this perspective does not accurately capture the nature of paranoia or the experiences of many schizophrenic patients. Instead of mistaking hallucinations and delusions for reality, Sass suggests that these experiences possess a "subjectivized" quality for schizophrenics (1995, 8). They are seen as products of the individual's consciousness rather than entities with independent existence, contrary to what the conventional view of poor reality-testing suggests. Hence, the individual afflicted with schizophrenia faces the dissolution of self, as they are unable to recognize their thoughts, feelings, voices, or visions as emanations of their own consciousness. Instead, these are attributed to external or unknown sources, resulting in a diminished sense of personal agency and authorship. It is a concept Sass refers to as "double bookkeeping" in the people of schizophrenia. As he suggests, such individuals project part of their own consciousness onto the external world and live in a paradoxical mode, of reality and hallucination. As they delve deeper into hallucinatory experiences, they further disconnect their mind from their sense of self, turning their identity into something observed from the outside rather than lived from within, leading to a profound loss of personal agency. Teddy's mental state is resembles Samuel Beckett's the Unnamable whose "condition is similar to that of the Kleinian infant for whom there is the good voice and the bad voice" (Aryan, 2021, p. 108); however it "is further exacerbated if the voice hearer finds him or herself in a universe where there is no other who might ascertain one's existence; this becomes a powerful source of ontological insecurity" (Aryan, 2021, p. 110).

Accordingly, Teddy undergoes the process of schizophrenia as the novel presents Teddy as a character with two distinct identities, one as a U.S. Marshal and a veteran of World War II, and the other as a patient in the mental hospital on Shutter Island,

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known under the name Andrew Laeddis, and creates a compelling narrative that challenges perceptions of authentic self and reality, draws attention into a deep exploration of Teddy's psyche. This shift into an alternate identity serves as Teddy's way of escaping the pain and guilt that haunt him, allowing him to re-imagine himself not as the man who faces failure and despair, however as a figure of justice seeking to right the wrongs done to his family. This duality in his character highlights the depth of his psychological struggle, as he clings to a narrative that distances him from his past and rewrites his role in the tragedy, showcasing the complex ways individuals might cope with severe trauma by constructing protective layers of denial and fantasy. In his newly adopted personality, Teddy exhibits behaviors that starkly contrast with his true self. He begins to abstain from alcohol, for instance, when Dr. Cawley inquires Teddy about his drink preference, Teddy opts for "soda water", a choice that takes Dr. Naering one of the staff of Ashecliffe Hospital by surprise, prompting him to question how Teddy could resist alcohol. This reaction highlights Dr. Naering's awareness of Teddy's past struggles and his expectation of Teddy's indulgence in alcohol as a coping mechanism (Lehane, 2003, p. 66). Understanding Teddy's condition, Dr. Naering views this abstention not merely as a simple preference, however as a significant shift, ultimately acknowledging it as an "outstanding defense mechanism" (Lehane, 2003, p. 67). This acknowledgment by Dr. Naering underscores the depth of Teddy's psychological transformation and his efforts to distance himself from past behaviors, marking a deliberate attempt to redefine his coping strategies in the face of trauma.

Teddy is grappling with delusions and is plagued by hallucinations and hearing voices, leading him to create and narrate stories. This is evidenced when Dr. Cawley presents him with a report detailing his condition during his stay at the Shutter Island. The document outlines how Teddy's mind has constructed elaborate narratives as a response to the voices and visions that haunt him. These episodes of hallucination and the resulting stories underscore the severity of his psychological distress. As the document shows:

Patient is highly intelligent and highly delusional. Known proclivity for violence. Extremely agitated. Shows no remorse for his crime because his denial is such that no crime ever took place. Patient has erected a series of highly developed and highly fantastical narratives which preclude, at this time, his facing the truth of his actions. (Lehan, 2003, p. 287)

As Stephens and Graham argue that a breakdown in self-consciousness leads individuals to question their own thoughts and emotions, making them unable to recognize these as their own. Instead, they attribute these internal experiences to outside forces. This phenomenon, particularly noted in individuals with schizophrenia, is referred to by Stephens and Graham as "delusions of reference" (2000, p. 16). They explain this concept with an example "the subject may have overheard another saying 'Give cancer to the crippled bastard' but may mistakenly believe that the speech was directed at him" (2000, p. 16). This misattribution of external voices to oneself results in a loss of control and an increase in anxiety, and these disembodied voices carry uncanny effect as the individuals struggle to identify the true origin of their perceptions. A disembodied voice, being uncanny, assumes a heightened authority. This uncanny effect intensifies if the voice is persistent. The situation worsens when the individual, hearing the voice, perceives themselves in a universe lacking others who could validate their existence, thus intensifying ontological insecurity. For instance, When Teddy wondering his stay in Shutter Island and his involvement in all these investigations, Chuck claims " [m]aybe they were lonely. All of them. Needed some company from the outside world" (Lehane, 2003, p. 64) and Teddy answers "[s]ure. Made up a story so they could bring us here?" (Lehane, 2003, p. 64). This disembodied experience occurs, as Stephens and Graham argue, when self-consciousness undergoes a breakdown. Normally, self-consciousness allows individuals to recognize their thoughts and emotions as their own through introspection. But when this internal awareness fades, people begin to doubt whether their thoughts and feelings truly belong to them, feeling instead as though these thoughts have been imposed by external forces. This detachment from one's thoughts and the sensation of hearing external voices are aspects of what Stephens and Graham call "alienated self-consciousness" (2000, p. 4). Even as individuals remain aware of these intrusive thoughts and voices, they ascribe them to sources outside themselves. Specifically, they believe these thoughts and voices come "to another person rather than to the subject" (Stephen and Graham, 2000, p. 4). Among those with schizophrenia, a common experience is thought insertion, where a person recognizes that the thoughts are happening within their own mind—"They regard them [the thoughts] as occurring within their ego boundaries" (Stephen and Graham, 2000, p. 126). Yet, they feel these thoughts have been implanted by another entity.

Accordingly, as Teddy's self-consciousness undergoes a breakdown, ensnared in the depths of his delusions and from his voice hearing, he makes up a character named Rachel Solando, whom he believes to be a patient who murdered her three children and subsequently escaped from the hospital. In his fabricated narrative, Rachel leaves behind a cryptic note, perceived by Teddy as a crucial clue to her whereabouts. This note, filled with numbers, becomes a focal point for Teddy, driving him into an obsessive quest to decipher its meaning.

THE LAW OF 4
I AM 47
THEY WERE 80
YOU ARE 3+
WE ARE 4
BUT
WHO IS 67?

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The puzzle acts as a metaphor for Teddy's struggle to piece together fragmented psyche and aspects of his life. The puzzle suggests a search for understanding one's place in a broader scheme, one's existence, while grappling with the ambiguity of "WHO IS 67?" embodies Teddy's quest for answers in a place where truth is elusive. This cryptic numerical game not only fuels Teddy's doubts and theories, but also mirrors his internal battle with denial and projection, as he seeks to resolve his identity amidst the turmoil of his investigations and the shadows of his past. In this regard, Teddy's struggles and doubts about his own existence stem from a breaking of his consciousness. This internal rupture disrupts his sense of self, leading him to question the reality of his identity and presence. Teddy deciphers the puzzle, revealing that all mentioned numbers ultimately relate to the number 13, a number that seems to hold significance for Rachel Solando, given her name contains thirteen letters. Dr. Cawley says "thirteen is often a significant number to schizophrenics" as it holds a bad luck. The message uses a simple system where numbers correspond to their place in the alphabet (A=1, B=2, etc.). Thus, "I am 47" translates to the name "Rachel" when the numerical values assigned to each letter are added. The number "80" represents the combined value of her surname, with Teddy interpreting "they" as referring to Rachel's husband and children. Teddy, Chuck, and Cawley deduce that "three" likely signifies her children, with Rachel herself being the additional one, hence "we are four." (Lehane, 2003, pp. 88-91). However, the meaning behind the number 67 remains a mystery to Teddy. As he says "It's the one I can't break. Whatever it refers to isn't anything I'm familiar with, which makes me think it's something on this island" (Lehane, 2003, p. 91). As the narrative progresses, Dr. Cawley reveals a pivotal truth to Teddy, confronting him with the reality that "the law of four" is a code pertaining to personal identities:

EDWARD DANIELS- ANDREW LAEDDIS

RACHEL SOLANDO-DOLORES CHANAL(Lehane, 2003, p. 288)

This revelation uncovers that Teddy himself is the elusive number 67 Andrew Laeddis, the missing patient from Shutter Island that they have been seeking. Edward and Andrew both have thirteen letters, so as Rachel and Dolores. As Cawley asks Teddy "what do these letters have in common?" Teddy says "Thirteen" (Lehane, 2003, p. 289). This moment is crucial, as it marks a turning point in the story, where the layers of Teddy's own delusions begin to unravel, exposing the depth of his denial and the complex interplay of his identities. Dr. Cawley's confrontation forces Teddy to face the truth about himself, that he is not just the investigator he believes himself to be, but also the subject of the investigation, deeply entwined in the very fabric of Shutter Island's mysteries. This realization challenges Teddy's perception of reality and his understanding of his own existence, pushing the story into a new, revealing light.

In this sense, as Teddy navigates through his doubts and thoughts, Teddy's journey becomes less about affirming his existence and more about denying his own sense of self, pushing him further into a state of denial. He externalizes his thoughts and emotions, projecting them onto fabricated characters like Rachel Solando and Edward Daniels (Teddy) rather than confronting his internal turmoil. Correspondingly the novel serves as the collapse of Cartesian *Cogito*. According to the principle of "Cogito ergo sum" by Descartes, the act of doubting confirms the doubter's existence. If doubting is a form of thought, then the presence of a thinker is undeniable, establishing the thinker's existence as a certainty. This also suggests that to think is to represent existence "I think" means I represent; 'I am' refers to existence itself" (Burke, 1998, p. 69). Thus, the entity capable of thought becomes a solid, unquestionable base for understanding the world, as "I am, I exist—that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking" (Descartes, 1998, p. 18). However, Teddy challenges this concept, as he expresses doubt over being the thinking or speaking subject, as Cawley claims "[y]ou're gifted with codes, even flirted with becoming a code breaker in the war, isn't that right?" He says "No!" (Lehane, 2003, p. 289). This doubt signifies a break in consciousness, where the individual can no longer link their thoughts to themselves, leading to an inability to confirm their own existence, thus presenting a breakdown of the Cartesian *Cogito*.

Teddy transforms the voices he hears into characters, creating Rachel Solando as a fictional substitute to compensate for the loss of his wife, Dolores, as a means to cope with his trauma. By inventing Rachel, Teddy initiates an internal dialogue, weaving stories that allow him to process and indirectly confront his painful memories. As Aryan argues, "the fear of losing authorial agency . . . [is] a significant source of artistic creativity as the writer projects these semiparanoid delusions, fears, and anxieties into characters and stories" (2023, p. 339). This act of storytelling becomes Teddy's way of navigating his grief and guilt, providing him with a semblance of control over his overwhelming emotions. Through Rachel, Teddy crafts a narrative that parallels his own experiences, yet allows him to maintain a distance from the direct pain associated with Dolores' tragic actions. Thus, in one of Teddy's hallucinations, Rachel tells him "[g]ive me a hand and I'll be Dolores. I'll be your wife. She'll come back to you" (Lehane, 2003, p. 161) and he says "[s]ure, you bet," (p. 161). When Dr. Cawley tries to bring Teddy back to reality by highlighting the impossibility of loving a woman who killed her own children, Teddy refuses to accept this truth. He responds with denial, asserting "I can't be alone. I can't face that. Not in this fucking world. I need her. She's my Dolores" (Lehane, 2003, p. 163). This moment signifies Teddy's deep yearning for a connection and his attempt to fill the void left by Dolores through the imagined presence of Rachel. Turning verbal or auditory hallucinations into tangible characters is a therapeutic strategy used by Julian Leff. In 2014, Leff launched a study aimed at assisting individuals with schizophrenia by giving their abstract voices a more concrete form. The goal, shared by Leff and his team, was "[t]o encourage them [the patients] to engage in a dialogue with the avatar" (2013, p. 428). Leff notes that this process allows patients "[t]hese people are giving a face to an incredibly destructive force in their mind. Giving them control to

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create the avatar lets them control the situation and even make friends with it" (quoted in Brauser 2014). Instead of attempting to silence these voices—a strategy often found to be counterproductive—the approach involves interacting with them. Over a few weeks, this interaction leads to “the avatar progressively changes from being persecutory to becoming appreciative and supportive” (Leff et al. 2014, 167). This technique mirrors the actions Teddy in the novel, who crafts a fictional persona from the disembodied voices he hears. Hence, communicating these voices essential. For instance, Patricia Waugh highlights that failing to communicate or verbalize trauma can lead to total annihilation. She argues that in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), Virginia Woolf portrays this concept through her depiction of voice-hearing, a symptom she personally associated with her own early experiences of violation and loss, including childhood sexual abuse, patriarchal oppression, and the early death of close family members. Woolf transfers her experiences to the character of Septimus Smith, a war veteran, situating the novel in 1922, coinciding with the British Government's first official report on shell shock. Septimus's struggle to convey his traumatic memories and emotions is exacerbated by his doctors, whom he labels as “violators of the soul” for their narrow focus on physical symptoms and disregard for his need to share his “message.” The medical professionals' failure to acknowledge what the voices represent leads Septimus to suicide (2015, p. 54). Waugh argues that Woolf's own tragic end in 1941 reflects a similar crisis. Believing she had lost her ability to write and thus “communicate” her internal turmoil, she left a farewell note for her sister “intimating that the voices had returned but, because no longer communicable, no longer within her control” (Waugh, 2015, p. 54). Thus, the return of the voices, now beyond her ability to express, signaled a loss of control, culminating in her suicide.

As Arya Aryan argues “schizophrenia is a product of hyper-reflexivity and an attempt to de-centralise power” (2020, pp. 165-66). Hence, The altered state of consciousness functions as a survival tool, helping individuals navigate through and mitigate the devastating impacts of trauma. This adaptive mechanism allows survivors to distance themselves from the immediate emotional turmoil. Moreover, As Teddy's consciousness fractures, external influences infiltrate, leading to a fragmentation of his self. This disintegration aligns with Derrida's observation that “the absence of a transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely” (2008, p. 91). Consequently, the characters within the narrative emerge as projections of Teddy's psyche, embodying the diverse aspects and conflicts of his inner world. This process underscores the complexity of Teddy's mental state, where the boundaries between self and other blur, and his personal narrative unfolds through the entities he conjures. These characters, born from Teddy's troubled consciousness, serve as manifestations his fragmented self on his perception of reality.

To conclude, *Shutter Island*, as a post-war novel, fundamentally challenges the Cartesian concept of the self, delving into the complexities of consciousness that fractures under the weight of trauma, leading to a fragmented self. In this narrative, the very fabric of reality becomes subjective, illustrating how experiences of war and the subsequent mental health issues, such as schizophrenia, can distort an individual's grasp on what is objectively true. The novel intricately explores the aftermath of war, not just on the physical environment, but on the human psyche, portraying characters who grapple with their shattered selves and perceptions of the world around them. It highlights how post-war trauma can lead to conditions where the mind, in an attempt to cope, may construct alternate realities, challenging the notion of a singular, objective reality. *Shutter Island* serves as reflection on the enduring impacts of war, suggesting that for those like Teddy, reality is not a fixed, universal experience but one deeply influenced by personal suffering and psychological fragmentation. Through its portrayal of schizophrenia and the struggle with personal identity post-conflict, the novel reconsiders the boundaries between the real and the imagined, and the profound ways in which trauma can alter one's understanding of existence itself.

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